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Heartland Bank to move headquarters into old Port Columbus terminal



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By **Reis Thebault**

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Heartland Bank plans to lease and renovate the old Port Columbus terminal and hangar.

The bank has signed a letter of intent to lease the property and plans to move its corporate headquarters to the site, CEO Scott McComb said on Tuesday.

Heartland's corporate office in Gahanna is full, McComb said, and he wants to give his employees some elbow room as well as have some space for expansion.

He said the company could move to the site by late 2016. The move would consolidate about 70 workers at the airport site.

The terminal and hangar, which opened in 1929 at 4920 E. 5th Ave., have been home to a number of businesses, but both have been unoccupied and in disrepair for several years.



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Scott McComb, CEO of Heartland Bank, stands in front of the old Port Columbus terminal and hangar, which his bank plans to lease as its new headquarters.

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The terminal's classic Art Deco look and the property's history made this site stand out from the several others Heartland has looked at, McComb said.

"When I started looking at all the other office buildings, they're basically just plain office buildings," he said. "And that's not us. We're very unique."

George O'Donnel, a member of the Columbus Airport Terminal Stabilization Fund, said the deal is a slam dunk. "We're just elated," he said.

McComb said there still are a lot of moving parts to the deal. He is waiting to receive state and federal tax credits for restoring the terminal, which is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The terms of the lease for the 6-acre site have yet to be agreed upon, but McComb said he will follow through on the deal.

"Heartland is not known as a place where we don't get the job done, and I want to get this done," he said.

Demolition inside the terminal began last week. O'Donnel's stabilization committee raised \$50,000 for the work and received a matching grant from the Columbus Foundation.

Heartland Bank is not on the hook for any of that cost, but the company will have to pay for renovations.

Backers have worked for about two years to save the building that served air passengers until 1958, when the current Port Columbus terminal opened.

O'Donnel said he is excited to work with McComb.

"The depth he has thought about what he wants to do with the buildings is beyond what the committee had expected 28 months ago," O'Donnel said. "It's unbelievable."

The terminal is the central part of Columbus' rich aviation history. Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart were instrumental in creating the original airport. The terminal is among the oldest of its kind so close to its original condition.

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